

Personnel Monthly

State Personnel Department

Applying for a State Job is Easy! Part I

At first glance, the application process for state government positions may seem overwhelming. In reality, the process is actually very straightforward and works to match the most qualified individuals with available positions throughout the State. This series will break down the steps an applicant follows to apply for a position with the State of Alabama.

The process begins with a job announcement which, appropriately enough, announces a vacancy in state government. An announcement may either be **continuous**, meaning that applications are accepted continually, or **current**, meaning applications are only accepted for a specified time period (typically three weeks). Such factors as the number of vacancies and the frequency with which those vacancies occur are considered when determining whether a job is opened on a continuous or current basis. Jobs open for current recruitment include a closing date on the bottom of the announcement. This is the date by which

all applications must be received to be considered for the position. Applications received after this date will not be accepted but the applicant will be placed on a mailing list so he or she will receive notification the next time the job is opened for receipt of applications.

Whether a job is opened on a continuous or current basis, it may either be announced as **open-competitive** or **promotional**. An open-competitive job is open to any person who meets the education and experience requirements published on the announcement. A promotional job is only open to State employees who have current permanent status in a particular job classification, and who meet the specified education and experience requirements. All announcements for State jobs will indicate whether they are open-competitive or promotional. If an announcement is promotional, it will further identify what job classifications



qualify.

Regardless of type, all open jobs are listed on the State Personnel Department's website, www.personnel.state.al.us. This website has a link entitled "Job Listings" which takes applicants to jobs currently open for application. Here, all announcements are sorted into three headings: Continuous Announcements; Current Announcements; and Promotional Announcements. This allows applicants to easily determine if there is a deadline by
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Special points of interest:

- The Legislature worked hard for YOU!
- Free Training is available through State Personnel.
- Applying for a State Job is Easy!
- Help us welcome Sharon Massey to State Personnel.
- Meet hard working state employees Nadine Ellis and Paul Thomas.

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2007 Legislative Wrap-Up

This year state legislators worked hard to bring benefits to State employees. The following bills have been signed into law:

* State employees will receive a 3.5% cost of living increase effective October 1, and another 3.5% effective October 1, 2008!

* Lower classification employees will once again be able to donate leave to higher classification employees! In an effort to assist, State Personnel has offered to post information regarding those employees who need donations on its website. For more information please call 334-353-3747.

* The Employees' Defined Contribution Savings Fund received 1 million dollars again this year—all employees who are members of Nationwide Retirement Solutions or RSA-1 may apply for a portion of this matching contribution plan! See page 4 for more.

Employee Assistance Program—Helping you in every aspect of life

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has been around for many years, but recent changes have made it far more accessible to employees. The program, through a contract with Behavioral Health Systems (BHS), is now able to provide assistance to Alabama State employees and their dependents throughout the United States.

Through EAP, you can find local resources to help with financial or legal problems. You can seek counseling on any issue, including interpersonal relationships, depression, stress, and work-related problems.

The EAP allows an employee to

make self-referrals. To do so, the employee or the employee's dependent, need only call 800-245-1150. When placing the call, it is important to know your classification code, department, and division. Each fiscal year (October 1–September 30), every merit system employee and each of his or her dependents are eligible for three free visits to a health care professional through EAP. After the third visit, if you wish to continue counseling, you will be responsible for the cost through your health insurance program.

Your call to BHS will be answered by a mental health professional who will be able to determine an appropriate referral,

schedule an assessment, and verify your eligibility. The case coordinator who schedules your assessment will continue to monitor your progress and will be your point-person throughout the process. When receiving your referral, you can request a male or female counselor, or even someone who specializes in faith-based counseling. It is important to know that all self-referred visits are completely confidential—your employer will not be notified that you have accessed the EAP.

If you have any questions about this program you can call Risk Management at 334-223-6153. Remember that with EAP, the first step to receiving help is picking up the phone.

Ask Sharon Massey: A Q&A For Your Important Employment Questions

Sharon Massey is a familiar face to many of you. Among many other significant accomplishments, Sharon spent eight years as a field representative for the Alabama State Employees Association. We are very pleased that Sharon has chosen to once again work with State employees and she is now in State Personnel's Training Program.

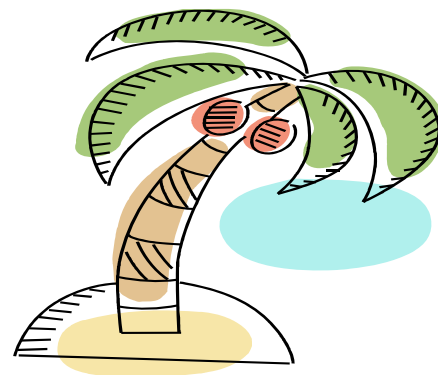
This month's questions for Sharon are:

Q: As a new employee, do I start earning leave immediately?

A: "In a word, yes. You will accrue four hours and twenty minutes of leave at the end of your first pay period. This accrual will be indicated on the paystub of your first paycheck."

Q: I put in a request for annual leave and the request was denied by my supervisor. Can he do this?

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Because summer is a popular time to get away, Sharon discusses leave this month.

Meet Nadine Ellis: Department of Corrections Employee for 22 years

Nadine Ellis is currently employed as a Personnel Assistant III at the Department of Corrections, where she has worked since August 1985. Nadine answered a few questions about her employment with the State.

Q: What have some of the biggest changes in state employment been over years?

A: "There have been so many changes in State government...we have gone from typewriters to computers, changes in the clerical and accounting classifications, and direct deposit for employees. However, I think the biggest change for me and a lot of other employees was the change from bi-weekly to semi-monthly pay."

Q: As the Co-Chair of the Secretarial Committee, I was wondering if you had any upcoming events that you want to mention.

A: "Well, I don't want to give away our program; however, I can tell you that this year's conference is going to be a great celebration

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Upcoming Training Topics and Dates

Last year State Personnel trained over 4,000 State employees on a range of topics including Employment Law, Progressive Discipline, and Prevention of Sexual Harassment. These seminars are free to the employee and the agency. For more information talk with your supervisor or visit the Personnel Department’s website at www.personnel.state.al.us. We look forward to seeing you in the classroom!

The following classes are being offered by State Personnel this summer:

- July 18: Performance Appraisal for Supervisors – Birmingham
- July 19: Progressive Discipline – Birmingham
- July 24: Progressive Discipline – Montgomery
- July 31-August 1: Dynamics of Supervision – Montgomery
- August 2: Progressive Discipline – Montgomery
- August 7: Performance Appraisal for Supervisors – Montgomery
- August 8: Interview and Selection – Montgomery
- August 14: Family and Medical Leave Act – Montgomery
- August 16: Sexual Harassment Prevention – Montgomery
- August 21-22: Dynamics of Supervision – Montgomery
- August 28: Progressive Discipline – Montgomery

Meet Paul Thomas: Personnel Employee of 33 years and Deputy Director of SPD

Q: What are the main duties involved in your position:

A: “As Deputy Director and also Manager of Recruitment and Examinations, I am responsible for the Staff and work involved in the administration of the competitive employment process. The Exam Division is responsible for the recruiting, application processing, employment test development, administration and scoring for the approximately 1,300 dif-

ferent types of jobs in the State’s Merit System.”

Q: How long have you been in State service?

A: “I have worked 33 years in State government, all but a few weeks of which has been with the State Personnel Department. I started working as a State employee four months out of college, making only \$303 every two weeks!”

Q: What do you believe are the greatest rewards associated with working in the public sector?

A: “Working with State Personnel has allowed me to share a purpose with other dedicated employees. The staff of Personnel have a clear sense of commitment to our Department’s mission. I think all career employees in Alabama’s classified service basically feel

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Meet Nadine, Cont’d.

and anyone who does not attend will be missing a fantastic conference. It will be held December 4-6 in Perdido, AL. We are going to have outstanding speakers who will be providing us with information to assist in our positions, as well as some excellent entertainment. The conference will be informative, beneficial and exciting. I would like to encourage all employees who are given the opportunity to attend to take advantage of it!”

Q: What do you believe are the greatest re-

wards associated with working in the public sector?

A: “I feel that the gift God gave me is service, and I really use it every day in my position. It makes me feel good to know that I can help current State employees with various situations that they may encounter, as well as assisting individuals to gain employment in State government. So my greatest reward is knowing that I’m doing what my Heavenly Father wants me to do and that is serving the

employees of the Department of Corrections and the citizens of the State of Alabama!”

Q: Okay, Nadine, now for the big question...Alabama or Auburn?

A: “Alabama. Roll Tide!!”

Thank you Nadine for your service, your time, and your thoughtful answers!





Meet Paul, Cont'd.

that shared sense of purpose with the other employees in their organization. It is that feeling of belonging to a group that is trying to do the right thing that makes me feel good when I go home at night."

Q: What do you think are some of the biggest misconceptions about State service?

A: "That State jobs are easy, and that anyone can do them. The truth is that most State Merit System jobs involve a high level of complexity and responsibility. We have people that work in complex techni-

cal career fields like engineering, science, accounting, and medicine. Other State employees must make decisions in life and death situations while working in the areas of law enforcement and corrections. It takes highly trained, dedicated and competent people to fill these jobs."

Q: Alabama or Auburn?

A: "I have to answer this one carefully as my wife and in-laws are all Auburn graduates. However, since I have a daughter that graduated from Alabama, a son that is in his third year at the University, and is a

walk-on punter/kicker with the Alabama football team, and I received my undergraduate degree from Alabama—it has to be ALABAMA!"

Thank you Paul Thomas for your service, your time, and your insightful answers about Personnel and State service.

Ask Sharon, Cont'd.

A: "The answer is yes. Supervisors usually make an effort to accommodate annual leave requests. That said, sometimes the workload dictates how many people are on annual leave at a given time. Please check with your agency or department for more specific guidelines concerning annual leave."

Q: What does it mean when my supervisor says "annual leave is a privilege, not a right?"

A: "That is a great question, and one that I

know a lot of employees have. The answer is that annual leave is an employee benefit that is granted by the State of Alabama at the discretion of the appointing authority to be enjoyed by the employee."

Q: I am a merit system employee transferring to another merit system state agency. Will my annual leave transfer to my new agency?

A: "A merit system employee who transfers to another merit system agency can transfer his or her leave at the discretion of

the new appointing authority."

Q: I am retiring on June 30, 2007. When will I receive payment for my annual leave?

A: "First of all, congratulations on your retirement! You will receive payment for your accrued annual leave on August 1, 2007."

If you have questions regarding leave, or other personnel matters, please email them to AskSharon@personnel.alabama.gov.

How to Receive your Share of the \$1,000,000!



Once again the Legislature has appropriated \$1,000,000 to the Employees' Defined Contribution Savings Fund. The matching program is a separate plan from the RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan and Nationwide (formerly PEBSCO). However, RSA-1 and Nationwide are

qualified plans and by deferring into RSA-1 or Nationwide between October 1, 2006, and September 30, 2007, you qualify to receive the matching money.

In order to receive the matching money you must do all of the follow-

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Applying is Easy, Cont'd.

which the application must be submitted, and also prevents applicants from unnecessarily having to sort through jobs that are only open to State employees. Should an applicant need further assistance in finding jobs, the State Personnel Department also employs Career Counselors who assist applicants through the process.

Each announcement contains four basic sections: Type of Examination; Qualifications Needed to Apply; Kind of Work; and How to Apply. The first section, "Type of Examination," lets individuals know what kind of test will be used when evaluating qualified applicants. First, it is important to distinguish that the term test, as used by the State Personnel Department, includes any means of evaluating individuals for a position. Tests may either be assembled, requiring candidates to actually assemble in a particular location to complete the test, or unassembled, where applicants are evaluated by means such as the information provided in their application or through supplemental information. Some examples of assembled exams are the traditional written examination or an assessment center which requires candidates to participate in simulated job situations. Some examples of unassembled exams are a training and experience evaluation which simply evaluates candidates based on their training and

experience as described in their application, or an experience record questionnaire which allows candidates to describe their experience in essay format.

The next section on the State job announcement is called "Qualifications Needed to Apply." Regardless of the type of examination used, all applicants will first be screened to determine whether they meet the identified minimum qualifications ("MQs"). If they do not meet the MQs, they will receive a notification in the mail stating that their application has been rejected for failure to have certain MQs. The notice will provide contact information should the applicant have any further questions.

The third section on the state job announcement is entitled "Kind of Work." This section provides the applicant with a realistic job preview. This information benefits candidates by allowing them to evaluate their expectations about a job against the actual working conditions. A realistic job preview may help prevent some applicants from applying for a particular job without having a good understanding of what that job actually involves. A job preview allows those applicants who are not interested in or qualified for the job to "opt out" of the selection process prior to taking an employment exam for the job.

The final section on the State job announcement is the "How to Apply" section. All positions require a State application be completed before an applicant will be considered for a position. This section will provide information on how and where applications can be obtained. This section will also list the last day applications may be submitted for jobs which are only opened on a current basis. Please remember, all applicants must complete a State application. Also, a separate application must be completed for each job that interests an applicant. Résumés can be submitted to supplement an application but they cannot replace an application, and they must provide all information in the same format as the state application.

Stay tuned for next month's article on the scoring process for State jobs. Terms such as "**banded scoring**," "**certifications**," "**registers**," and "**the rule of ten**" will be further explained to those interested in furthering their career in State service.

By: Amanda Mercado, State Personnel Analyst

How to Receive your Share of the \$1,000,000, Cont'd.

ing:

- * Defer into a 457 deferred compensation plan between October 1, 2006 and September 30, 2007—it is not too late to join;
- * Be enrolled in the matching program;
- * Not be a public school employee; and
- * Be employed by an eligible employer that has appropriated funds for the matching program.

If you enrolled in the matching program two years ago with Prudential, you will be automatically set up for this new match currently administered by Nationwide. However, if you are a member of RSA-1, you must enroll in the matching program by completing an additional form. For more information on signing up for the matching plan, please call 334-277-7820 or 800-239-3595.

For more information on the RSA-1 program, call 800-214-2158 or visit the Retire-

ment Systems of Alabama website at www.rsa.state.al.us. All employees of the State of Alabama are eligible to participate in the RSA-1 plan, regardless of age or participation in the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

By funding the Employees' Defined Contribution Fund, legislators are trying to reward you for planning for your future. Please take the time to learn more and reward yourself with a strong retirement plan.

State Personnel Department

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The Alabama Merit System law created the Personnel Department to be administered by a Personnel Director who answers to an independent board. The Board currently consists of five members who serve staggered six-year terms. Two members are appointed by the Governor, one by the Lieutenant Governor, one by the Speaker of the House, and one member is an elected classified state employee who is subject to all merit system rules and regulations.

By law the Board is required to meet once each month. Its principal functions are to:

- *adopt and amend rules and regulations;
- *adopt and modify classification and pay plans;
- *hear the appeals of employees who have been dismissed;
- *represent the taxpayers' interest in the improvement of personnel management in the state; and
- *advise and assist the Personnel Director.

The Personnel Department is divided into 9 major areas: Classification and Pay; Examination; Certification; Payroll and Personnel Audit; Information Technology; Training; Legal; Administrative Law Judge; and Special Projects. Please remember, the Personnel Department is here to protect the merit system, and to serve as a resource for State employees and the citizens of Alabama!

Meet the Board. There are five members on the State Personnel Board, which meets monthly. The next Board Meeting will be July 18.

Joe Dickson

Mr. Dickson, of Birmingham, retired as Editor/Publisher of The Birmingham World newspaper and currently works as a consultant. He was initially appointed to the Board by Governor Guy Hunt in February 1992, reappointed to a second term by Governor Fob James, Jr., and was reappointed to a new term in February of 2004 by Governor Bob Riley. He serves as the Board Chairman.

John McMillan

Mr. McMillan, of Stockton, is a retired Executive Vice President of the Alabama Forestry Association, and was initially appointed to the Board in February 1997 by Governor Fob James, Jr. He was reappointed to a second term by Governor Bob Riley.

Joyce P. O'Neal

Ms. O'Neal, a career Merit System employee with the Department of Human Resources, was elected to fill an unexpired term as the employee representative. In 2006 Ms. O'Neal was re-elected for a full term. A professional Social Worker, she previously worked as a Human Resources County Director and is currently Director of the State's Food Assistance Program with Human Resources.

Ellen G. McNair

Ms. McNair, of Montgomery, is currently Vice President of Corporate Development with the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce and is a past president of the Economic Development Association of Alabama. She was appointed to the Board by Speaker of the

House Seth M. Hammett.

James H. Anderson

Mr. Anderson, of Montgomery, is a partner in the law firm of Beers, Anderson, Jackson, Patty, Van Heest, and Fawal PC. He was appointed to the Board by Lieutenant Governor Lucy Baxley.

The August Board is scheduled to meet on August 15.